

## Instruments of American Power: Implementing Foreign Policies and Protecting Against Global Threats

*Featuring LTG (Ret.) H.R. McMaster, Dr. Samantha Ravich, and The Hon. Juan C. Zarate.  
Moderated by Clifford D. May*

MAY: I'm President Cliff May, and I'm pleased you're here with us today for a very special FDD conversation. 18 years ago we were attacked out of a clear blue sky, literally and figuratively both. Since then, the challenges facing the United States and our allies have only grown in complexity. China has not moderated. Russia has not reset its relations with us. More than ever, we need to integrate all tools, all instrumentalities, all weapons of American power. This mission must be accomplished if we are to adequately defend our security, our interests, and our values at home and abroad. FDD, as you may know, has launched three centers on American power expanding the work we've done in the past, providing research, analysis, and creative policy ideas on current and emerging threats. We share these ideas with policymakers from both parties, administrations, Congress, the media, and the wider national security community.

FDD centers focus on military and political power, on cyber power, and on economic power. All are, I believe, doing cutting edge research and analysis. These centers are led and staffed by thought leaders of varying backgrounds, including academic, military, intelligence, government, law, and finance. We are immensely proud to have them as colleagues. You will hear today from the chairs of our three centers, all of whom have served our country by providing critical analyses at the most senior levels.

Lieutenant General HR McMaster, chair of our Center on Military and Political Power, he previously served, as of course you all know, as National Security Advisor to President Trump. Dr. Samantha Ravich, Chair of our Center on Cyber and Technology Innovation, she is currently Vice Chair of the President's Intelligence Advisory Board, and previously served as Deputy National Security Advisor to Vice President Cheney. The Honorable Juan Zarate, Chair of our Center on Economic and Financial Power, he previously served as the Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor for Combating Terrorism.

America's adversaries are determined to reshape the world order and to diminish and displace the United States in any ways that they can. These nations and non-state actors may employ hybrid and gray zone tactics. They may operate against the United States and our allies in new domains, such as space and cyberspace, and they use new forms of economic and information warfare and lawfare. In some cases, our adversaries wage their campaigns using sophisticated asymmetrical capabilities below the threshold of war, as the United States has traditionally defined it. They believe that operating this way will enable them to achieve incremental but overtime substantial progress without eliciting a consequential response from the United States.

Our leaders have too often failed to compete effectively by integrating all elements of American power into a holistic, comprehensive, and forward thinking strategy. America has powerful tools, powerful weapons, but they must be employed better than they have been to date

if we are to defeat the threats and overcome the challenges posed to our national security and prosperity, if we are to deter our enemies and defeat those who we cannot deter.

Today's program is one of many we host throughout the year. For more information on all our work and our areas of focus, we encourage you to visit our website, that's FDD.org. As many of you know, FDD is a nonpartisan policy institute. We take no foreign government or foreign corporate funding, don't ever intend to.

We're glad to be joined today by a distinguished audience of diplomats and representatives from Congress, the State Department, Pentagon, active duty military personnel, experts from the policy community, and quite a few members of the media.

By way of housekeeping, I should note that today's event is being live streamed and broadcast on CSPAN. I encourage guests here and online to join in on the conversation. On Twitter, just use @FDD.

Thank you all for being here in person or watching on CSPAN or watching online, and if you're in this audience, then you're not just anyone. You're participating in, and in many cases, helping drive critical policy debates in what remains a free and open society.

I'm going to start the questioning off, get a few issues on the table, and then we'll turn to you, not least to the serious journalists who are with us today. Let me begin by talking about America's instruments of power. Two years ago, the national security strategy, one that you oversaw, stated that the United States was to compete with all tools of national power.

I think it's fair to say that over the last decade the U.S. has learned to use sanctions in a more muscular and targeted way and FDD's played a role in that, and Juan, you played a role in that. The U.S. also has utilized cyber capabilities to achieve ends that might previously have required economic pressure or military might. Samantha, you've certainly played a role in that. The U.S. has built bilateral and multilateral alliances to increase pressure on our adversaries. And the U.S. military has been forward thinking to ensure we outpace our enemies, though I don't think it's consistently had the resources to achieve that mission. Let me just start with that. H.R., General, am I painting too rosy a picture? Is there a more dismal picture? How have we been doing over the last few years on this?

MCMASTER: Cliff, I think what you raised is the essence of strategic competence and is foundational to our ability to compete effectively against the adversaries that you've mentioned. The great power competition is back with provisionist powers of China and Russia. We have the threat from non-state actors, jihadist terrorist organizations who want to kill our children and who are the enemies of all civilized people. Hostile states such as Iran, you've seen obviously what they've done over the last several months, not only to attack broadly against the West, against our partners in the region, but also to keep burning the fires of the sectarian civil war that is also allowing groups like ISIS, Al Qaeda, other related groups to continue to portray themselves as patrons and protectors of Sunni Arab populations in particular. We have to be able to integrate all elements of national power to compete effectively with powers and hostile states and non-state actors.

I would say that we're doing better. But what you've seen I think in recent weeks, months, days is I think an under appreciation for the degree to which all elements of national power have to be combined to achieve sustainable, really political outcomes, that are consistent with our vital interests. For example, when we talk about the operations that our military is conducting, they're not operations as ends in and of themselves. They're part of a much larger effort to ensure the security and prosperity of the American people, and to do that by competing effectively against very determined, and often as we see across the grid of the Middle East, very brutal enemies.

MAY: Juan, I'll start with you. Pick up on any of that you want, but I'll throw in this addition, which is, as our capabilities have evolved, I would argue so have the capabilities of our adversaries. China is well in advance of where it was in terms of taking over reefs, making them into islands, militarizing those islands, putting missiles on them. We have deprived the Islamic state of territory, but it still exists, and in fact, I would say that those who proclaim themselves to be fighting a jihad against us have over past years spread around the world. They're in more countries than ever before. They are far from being defeated. Russia has shown how, under Putin, it can play a weak hand rather well. It goes into the Middle East. Obama says, "You don't understand. It's a quagmire even for us." Putin says, "I have big Wellington boots. I know how to operate in quagmires. Don't worry about it. Let me show you what I can do." Our adversaries are also not standing still.

ZARATE: Cliff, first of all, thank you for having me. It's an honor to be here. I think you're right. The map of the world is being reshaped, right, and being reshaped by America's adversaries in many ways, physically as you demonstrate it and talked about. Russia's in Crimea. China is building islands. ISIS has erased borders. There's a physical dimension to the reshaping. There's a virtual reshaping. Sam's done great work in that domain, but the cyber world brings new communities, new borders, or borderless communities and opportunities and elements of power. You also have reshaped alliances that are not just being affected by America's adversaries, but being reshaped by how we think about power itself. Just to start off, to take a step back, I think the map of the world is being reshaped as we speak, and the challenge we have is to give life to the strategy that H.R. sort of helped formulate.

The problem is, and this gets to the less rosy dimension of the picture, is we are not very good at not just combining elements of power, but thinking about how the asymmetric properties of the global environment are actually taking place in how we operate in them. One of the things we've done at our center, right, is to think about how do we use economic and financial elements of power that we've used quite well over the last 20 years to affect American's enemies, to bankrupt them, to disrupt, dismantle financial networks that threaten us, to exclude illicit capital and rogue actors from the financial system, right? That's been the strategy that we've used, and the reason we've been successful for the most part in that regard is we've had primacy and we've maintained escalatory dominance, because of the primacy of the dollar, the role of our economy, our ability to define the rules of the road, right? All of that is part of this, but all that's being challenged. It's being challenged by our adversaries.

What's interesting, we forecasted this in the creation of our center over five years ago. We were saying this realm of economic and financial power is part of a broader tableau of asymmetric power that's happening around the world. Our enemies are getting smarter, more

nimble. They understand how to use the elements of the financial system. They're getting better at the use of cyber tools. They understand how to use kinetic activity, drone warfare, other things, in ways that make us more vulnerable, not just the U.S., but our allies. We have to think aggressively about how do we use these powers properly, strategically, sustainably. We do a lot of that work here. We think about how do we use sanctions? How do we use financial regulations to actually drive the exclusion of rogue actors from the system?

Secondly, we think about the defensive strategies because it's the Russians and the Chinese and even non-state actors that are thinking about how do they use their financial and economic resources to influence and to coerce and to shape environments, and so what does that defensive posture look like? Finally, one part of the strategy that hasn't been fully articulated yet is how do we use positive economic power and influence as a complement to what we're trying to do both defensively and offensively to reshape the environment? This has come up plainly when we talk about the competition with China and the one belt, one road context. How are we investing strategically? How are we promoting the kind of good behavior and alliances both state and non-state that we want to see? How we think about the use of our economic power, financial power, that of our allies becomes a key part of it.

And I still think we have not figured out as a country how do we stitch this together so that we can compete in an environment where our state adversaries are operating in this asymmetric domain. They're very much willing to ally with non-state actors and networks, the Russians with organized criminal networks, the Chinese using cyber activists and hackers, the Iranians using all forms of proxies to attack not only our interest but our allies' interest. We have yet to figure out how do we deal aggressively in an asymmetric environment where in many cases we have predominant power and we just don't know quite how to use it.

MAY: Samantha, I'll go to you. I can tell you have things you want to say, pick up on, anything you want to disagree with, but I also want to emphasize the extent to which you've been instrumental in making clear to the extent to which cyber weapons and cyber capabilities can impact our economic strength and our military strength, and of which I don't think everybody has been aware of. This is not just about getting your personal information so that that you can be blackmailed online. This is way beyond that. Pickup from there.

RAVICH: Yeah, so in 2015 we really started exploring the notion that we coined Cyber-Enabled Economic Warfare. That is the use by adversaries using cyber means to undermine key elements of our economy and our economic strength in order to weaken us strategically, weaken our military, weaken our ability to finance our military, weakening our innovation base to weaken our military, and weaken our ability to project power strategically, because we were concerned that these episodes of cyber-attacks that we saw, whether it was Iran against the banking industry in 2012, what North Korea did against a U.S. company, Sony Industries, and what they've been doing in South Korea for many, many years. What China and what Russia had been doing were seen as episodic, right? They were seen individually as acts of aggression, but they weren't being taken as, these are parts of a campaign plan, a campaign plan in large extent, as I said, to weaken our greatest source of power, which is our private sector.

We are only the number one military in the world because we are the number one economy in the world. Our innovation base is what drives our position in this world. We had been focusing on it, writing about it, understanding what the adversary, and very, very different, how the adversary understands cyber-enabled economic warfare from a lens in Beijing, in Moscow, in Tehran, in Pyongyang, great reports that you can get online. And we were really heartened when this notion of cyber-enabled economic warfare, and called as such, was called out specifically in the 2017 National Security Strategy. It was really the first time ever that our country at the highest level understood that type of intersection of our economy and our vulnerabilities to our economy, and how that leads to vulnerabilities in the strategic sense.

So here at FDD in the Center for Cyber and Technology Innovation, we do two things. The first is we focus on the adversary's campaign plan, what they're going after, how they're going after it, why they want to undermine certain parts of our economy and maybe not others, looking at, again, what they're doing in allied nations. That is the first part, kind of ringing the bell, ringing the bell up on the Hill, ringing the bell in the Executive Branch, and in DOD, in the Department of Energy because grid resiliency and reliability is obviously critical for all of this, as well in the corporate sector, right? It's easy for our corporate citizens to kind of hide as to, "Well, we're all being hit, or "What are we supposed to do about it?" We really kind of open their eyes to that.

But the second is, we're living, I want to say frighteningly in maybe a pre-9/11 mindset, except, where I look at it from, it is these cyber vulnerabilities. On the other part of the Center, we look about how can we harden our defenses? Because as we get out there more and, Juan, as well as anybody understands, our use of sanctions, our use of *Treasury's War*. Good call out, right?

ZARATE: Thank you.

RAVICH: Juan's book. You should all get it.

MCMASTER: You should know the last chapter of *Treasury's War*, Juan predicted the kind of competition you alluded to as well.

RAVICH: This is a powerful tool. Not to say people in glass houses shouldn't throw stones, but we do need to harden our castle walls because we are out there. When a country like Iran or even North Korea, China, Russia looks at how they can undermine us, the cyber-enabled economic warfare getting into our supply chains, which hopefully I'll have a moment to talk about in a little bit, is key to their strategy. At our other part of our center, we focus on what are some ways to harden the castle walls? We partnered with Microsoft on a supply chain defense project for the Pentagon. Real ways that can be piloted to make us stronger.

MAY: When we talk about peace through strength, everybody nods their head. But I don't know that we think through what that means. Essentially it means there's one guy in the bar you just don't mess with. He's just too tough – too tough. We could be that guy. I'm not sure we are. If you think about it, Iran's rule is mine ships, down a U.S. drone in international airspace, attack energy facilities in Saudi Arabia that are key to the economic economy. I'm not sure we've

deterred further escalation. I'm not sure they don't think they can push that envelope further. You may disagree, and I welcome that. China has for years been stealing us blind, hundreds of millions of dollars of intellectual property, including military secrets, building their defenses on that basis, and what have we done? Again, we've got to the point where the NBA dare not even insult them, right?

Russia has hacked our electric grid, attempted to undermine us in various ways. I think Putin is, if anything, emboldened. North Korea has been escalating its military tests. Yes, it may be that the President tried to use positive economic incentives with Kim Jong Un. I think Kim Jong Un does not believe that fire and fury awaits him if he doesn't compromise. I think without that, the idea of having a nice resort on the Sea of Japan, that's not going to do the trick. What does this say? I'll start with you on this again, H.R., about our assumptions about American power. Do we not have the tools or are we not using them properly? How do we make clear – how do we reinvigorate deterrents, so that we can deter most of our enemies and don't need to defeat most of our enemies? I guess that's my question.

MCMASTER: Okay. I think that we have improved just based on the recognition that we do need to compete more effectively. I'm sitting next to two of the people who really pioneered in really making us more effective in new arenas of competition. Juan really started our counter threat finance efforts as part of the post-9/11 effort to defeat terrorist organizations who would attack our country. Samantha has opened everybody's eyes to this new domain of competition in cyberspace and the use of disruptive technologies to go after us in new ways, to attack our national security innovation base, for example, in ways that we thought previously were sort of invulnerable or really not that important. I think that we are getting better, but I think what we have to recognize is that we are behind. We're behind because at the end of the Cold War we were flushed with a great sense of triumph and optimism and overconfidence and maybe even hubris to a certain extent.

We thought that these competitions were over. We had won, and I think that overconfidence and complacency shifted after a number of strategic shocks, certainly the mass murder attacks of 9/11, but also I think the unanticipated length and difficulty of the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and then the 2008 financial crisis. I think the emotional impetus behind our foreign policy shifted to a certain extent from over optimism to resignation, almost a sense of defeatism and a belief that really we can't really win in these competitions, and associated belief then that our disengagement from these complex competitions was an unmitigated good. Now what these two approaches had, the approach of complacency and the approach of resignation, what they had in common is a failure to recognize the degree of agency and control the other, our adversaries, our enemies have over the future course of events.

Both of these approaches were, I would say, profoundly arrogant because they believed that the future course of events in our security depended just on what we decided to do, and didn't recognize that war certainly, but also other forms of competition, are interactive, and the course of events will be anything but linear. I think it's important for us to recognize, first of all as Americans, what is at stake in these competitions, and then why we must put together strategies that are really aimed at winning, at prevailing, in these complex competitions. It may be that we've been at war for longer than Americans want, but I think for example, in places like

the greater Middle East centered on the Syria decision recently for example, or in Afghanistan, we have to be able to recognize what are our vital interests that are at stake? Why is this important to us and our security?

Then once we understand that better, think about it, then we have to work together to craft strategies that are, in Juan's words, sustainable, and to do what Samantha has said, is we have to break out of this pre-9/11 mentality. We ought to ask ourselves what could happen. What could happen when you have transnational terrorist organizations, jihadist terrorist organizations, who are more potent and capable than they were before 9/11 because remember, it was the Afghan alumni, right, the alumni from the mujahideen era resistance to the Soviet occupation in Afghanistan who committed mass murder against us on September 11th. The Al Qaeda and the ISIS alumni are orders of magnitude greater than they were then. They also exist in many different countries. They have much more sophisticated means available to them and cryptic communications, different and much more effective ways of recruiting young, vulnerable people into their calls and radicalizing them, and this effect of really the democratization of destruction in which they have access now to destructive capabilities previously associated only with nation states.

It's extremely dangerous, and when I think Americans ask the question they ought to ask, "Hey, why the heck are we still in Afghanistan and Syria," one of the main reasons is that we cannot win this fight on the defensive at the water's edge. These are unscrupulous, ruthless people who want to commit mass murder of innocents as their principle tactic in a war against anyone who does not adhere to their perverted interpretation of Islam. The only way to really win this fight is to keep them worried more about their own safety, and then to isolate them from sources of strength and support, financially and otherwise that you can only really do by working closely with partners in the region, and obviously partners who are actually bearing the greatest cost in these fights, and to have that access you need from an intelligence perspective, so you can apply all the tools, cyber tools, financial tools, economic tools, and military and diplomatic efforts to advance and protect our interests.

I know it feels good to some people to think, "Let's just disengage from that and worry about ourselves." But of course if we did that we would become very vulnerable, and we ought to remember the tremendous human costs, financial costs as well, associated with a catastrophic attack like occurred on 9/11.

MAY: I want one quick follow up on this. The military planning and training necessary to deter China as it builds its military capabilities, very different from what's necessary to defeat non-state actors and those who support them, such as Islamic Republic Iran. Can we do both at once?

MCMASTER: Yeah, right.

MAY: Is the military capable, because we get very different training missions.

MCMASTER: We have to do both at once, right, because we don't get to pick, right? As my friend historian Conrad Crane often says, there are two ways to fight the United States, right?

Asymmetrically and stupid and you hope that your enemy picks stupid, but they're unlikely to do so. We have to be capable of integrating all elements of national power, and our military has to be capable at deterring state actors and as well as trying to deter non-state actors, but these are people who are fighting based on this ideology that I think are in many ways undeterrable, right? I think the way that we have to look at this is we have to be able to defeat these organizations by isolating them from sources of strength and support, which include physical, military, financial, psychological and ideological, the ability to use communications and cyber capabilities.

You can't defeat them if you don't fight them. I think we have to maintain our own will, right? War is an extension of politics, as I was mentioning, but it's also a contest of wills. We ought to examine do we have the will to advance and protect our interests against this broad range of adversaries?

On deterrence, just quickly, I would just say there are two fundamental ways to deter an enemy or a potential enemy. One is the threat of punitive action later, so that the costs are so high they have to factor into decision making. They decide, "Well, maybe I won't commit this act of aggression." But the other is deterrence by denial, which means convincing your enemy that enemy cannot accomplish his objectives through that action. This is why Samantha's talking about building a wall of defense is also an important means of deterrence as well as a range of offensive capabilities.

Then of course to deter cyber actors, for example, we have to be able to apply capabilities outside of cyberspace. We shouldn't just think of this as a cyber-only competition. In our military now, the catch phrase, which some of us helped coin years ago, we hope it's more than a catch phrase, is multi-domain warfare, multi-domain operations. In its essence, we've always had to do this, right? It's the ability to project power and influence across multiple domains for the military land, maritime, aerospace, but also cyberspace, economic and financial space. I think that's how we ought to think about how we integrate our efforts to really to deter and if necessary defeat our adversaries.

MAY: Samantha, you wanted to –

RAVICH: Yeah. H.R., you mentioned deterrence by punishment and deterrence by denial. It's some of the things that the Cyberspace Solarium Commission that was written into the NDAA, I'm proud to be a member of that up on the Hill, is looking at how do we deter in today's world? How do we showcase our strength and power, right, in a world where China steals our technology and then fields hypersonic, in a way that we can't even get ahead of what they're doing. How do we showcase our ability to project power, our will to do so, the strength of our resiliency in a world where a grid can be brought down? It's not the world of above-ground nuclear tests anymore where everyone saw, "Wow, this is their capability, and if they had to, the Americans are going to use this," right? Today I think is the 244th birthday of the Navy, showcasing –

ZARATE: Happy birthday.

RAVICH: Happy birthday, Navy. Showcasing an aircraft carrier was a sure sign of strength. I would put out there, it still is, but, how do we showcase our cyber strength, our willingness to deter by punishment and to showcase our resiliency? One of the things also at the Center that we've been working on, let me say, I think it's a groundbreaking idea, we've put together is continuity of the economy. Back in the Cold War, we had continuity of operations and continuity of government in the event that there was an attack by the Soviets, that the Soviets actually knew we could get back up and running or never be brought down in the first place and they would suffer the consequences. But as we talk about attacks on our economy, think about what would happen if there was a large scale cyber-attack against lots of different parts of our economy all at once. A grid, banks, healthcare system. How would we showcase in advance to the adversary, we're not going to be down for the count. And the next day, you're going to feel our wrath, Right? That is the ability to have the adversary understand our capabilities in a very clear and present way, as well as our will is something we have to grapple with in today's world.

ZARATE: If I can just feed off of the brilliant comments here from both H.R. and Sam, I think we've discounted heavily the reality that the cornerstone of power is the perception of power, right? We can't be in all places at all times. We can't take maximalist action against all enemies. We don't want to. We can't. There are only some demands and certain demands we could make of our allies. So, there are limits to what you can actually do in pre-conflict and in conflict, however you define that. So, I think we have not tended to this idea that the perception of power is the essence not just of deterrence, but of power itself. The ability to not act and to have the environment shaped the way that we want, to have American values and interests met by the sheer fact that people understand as Sam was saying, what it is that the U.S. can do, what we want to see happen, et cetera.

So, I think there's been a huge discounting. I think no administration has been immune from this problem. I think the Syrian red line episode was sort of the classic demonstration of a lack of appreciation that the perception of power matters, which means at some points you actually have to act. You actually have to bite at some point in order to give life and meaning to both the perception of that power and to what the consequences may be. We've got to pick our battles of, course.

Two other dimensions of this. One is I think we've discounted the role of key allies and by that I mean not just nation states, but the private sector in how we deter. I think one of the interesting innovations in the field of anti-money laundering and sanctions has been that it's really the private sector that has been the guardians of the gate of the system, which is to say part of the strategy has been to say, look, the financial community has a responsibility to understand and manage its risk around terrorism, around proliferation finance. Even now, with the Global Magnitsky Act and executive order around human rights and corruption, right?

These are not just the targets of sanctions. These are actual risks that the private sector has to manage and think about. Now shipping companies have to worry about the oil-to-oil transfers and sanctions evasion in the North Korean, Venezuelan, Iranian sanctions context. So, we have not done a good enough job of thinking about how does deterrence play out when we're enlisting other actors –

MCMASTER: Absolutely.

ZARATE: - In the global environment and creating the antibodies in the system that get the results that the United States wants. And in the economic domain, it's largely how do you make it harder, costly, and riskier for America's enemies to raise and move money around the world? Right? That's the essence of it.

The final part of it, and it goes to H.R.'s point, is we've both been reticent and unable to deal in these various domains all at once. That is to say our enemies have gotten very good at thinking about how they use these asymmetric tools in concert, right? The Russians know how to use their bots. They know how to use organized criminals. They know how to use their mercenaries. They know how to use their media in ways that are all intended to influence the environment in ways that undermine U.S. interest in most cases and advanced theirs.

We're not good at that. We're just not good. We're stove-piped. Our authorities are not blended, in a way. We have a very clear and important public private divide, which is important to keep in mind. And we also often don't see the threats that are emerging. That's why the cyber-enabled economic warfare, research and discipline that Sam's innovated is so important. Another domain, and I want to reference this as a key example, it's one that all three of our centers I think touch on is the challenge of norms. I think one of the things that our adversaries, especially the nation state adversaries are doing, are challenging the norms. What is acceptable behavior, right? How is it they can change the map, they can change the norms?

We're seeing this in spades with China, right? Human rights abuses with the Uyghurs, massive surveillance with their technology. Very difficult, interesting questions with ZTE and Huawei, their major technology companies, operating globally. So, some very interesting questions. And President Putin has made this a core part of his strategy. So what I find fascinating, and you'll all see this, and you all note it; whenever Russia's challenged, whether it's use of chemical weapons in Syria or interference in the U.S. elections, Putin's immediate retreat is to do three things: muddy the waters, change the framework, and he ends every conversation with, "Prove it." Right?

What he's trying to do is change the norms around evidence and proof, and we're left on our back heels because we're caught in Western paradigmatic ways of proving things and demonstrating things and legitimating action, and it's very difficult. And they understand if they can muddy the waters, if they can change the narrative, if they can even change the rules of what proof even means. That's a form of power. We often don't think that way and it's part of this domain, and we have to think that way.

RAVICH: If I can add one other thing –

MAY: Yeah.

RAVICH: - Because I think it really is important also to recognize that deterrence is going to have limits in the way that didn't exist when this was U.S. versus the Soviet Union. Right? Deterrence kind of brings to mind that we're going to stop something from happening. In

cyber and in other parts of what we're talking about, it's already happening, right? So, there is this notion that what we really are talking about may be persistent engagement. We're in this fight. We're not going to deter it. Now, we may be able to deter it from escalating, but the fight is happening. The fight is on, certainly in cyberspace. It's full on. So, the persistent engagement notion is that we have to, just like the words, say persistently engage, and I'm not talking engage sitting around a table and writing a treaty. That the conflict is on. And so if we kind of say, "Well, deterrence is to stop them from doing something," they're already doing it.

ZARATE: Can I just two finger this? I think it's really important, but one of the things we did when we worked together in the White House was to rethink not just the nature of deterrence, but the actors that can be affected.

RAVICH: That's right.

ZARATE: Because if you're thinking about the threats that we face and the nature of deterrence, and one of the things we had to deal with was the potential that terrorists would get their hands on a weapon of mass destruction. Right? How do you deter that? To H.R.'s point, Some of these actors are un-deterrable. They're going to act. They have apocalyptic views, right? So, that's fine. But if you pull the lens back and you open the aperture, there's an entire supply chain and an entire enabling network –

MCMASTER: Definitely.

ZARATE: - That would allow that to happen, right? So it's not just the trigger puller, it's not just the bomb thrower, it's not just the soldier with a, an AK-47 that you have to deter, or even the Kremlin or Beijing; it's the facilitators along the business chain, the supply chain that actually can impact what happens. And so, that affected the way we thought about WMD terrorism deterrence. It led to a very different kind of declaratory policy that President Bush issued.

RAVICH: And also, not terrorist financing, but also the proliferation security initiative.

ZARATE: Exactly.

RAVICH: Right? You know that –

ZARATE: Shippers.

RAVICH: Absolutely.

ZARATE: Scientists, bankers, deep pocket donors, right? There's an entire supply chain that would enable a terrorist group to actually develop or get their hands on a nuclear device or a radiological device. Right? It's opening the aperture to say, "Look, you're not just trying to deter one type of actor. It's an entire system or network that you try to impact."

MAY: H.R., I know you had a point to –

MCMASTER: No, I was just going to say, I think this is really what the FDD has done with these three centers is to think about security much more broadly, but to do so in a way that provides kind of the focus and the impetus for real policy change. I mean, I know across my career, I drew on the great work here. Now, it's wonderful to be part of it. I thought I'd just make one point that's relevant to both Samantha and Juan's points as well. We have cyber-enabled economic warfare, but we also have cyber-enabled information warfare and this is how Russia in particular, but many others, are operating against us in an effort to polarize America's polity and pit us against each other in a way that diminishes our confidence and our will so that we're not effective at competing against them.

And you don't – I mean, we take the bait a lot on this unfortunately, and we become divided over issues that we ought to be able to agree on. And I think especially in what FDD has taken on with these three centers, we ought to have obviously a preponderance of areas of agreement that would allow us to work together as Americans to bolster our confidence; our confidence in who we are as a people, in our democratic principles, in institutions and in processes, and confidence in a foreign policy that we can execute in a sustainable and consistent way over time.

Because Juan said that it's our will, right? Our perception of power is important. And I think that we are losing a bit now because of perceived inconsistency and therefore unreliability. As a result, what happens is like-minded partners whose interests really align with yours, they start to hedge. They start to say, "Well, can I rely on the United States?" And maybe if I can't, maybe I've got to make sure I don't burn my bridge with Russia, and maybe I do need to buy some S-400s from them. And maybe I do need to give them a little bit more free reign in Syria in exchange for their promise to diminish Iranian influence there, which is a lie. You know what I mean?

The perception, as Juan noted I think is a great example, I think there's a direct line between the unenforced red line in Syria and the annexation of Crimea, the invasion of Ukraine, and potentially even the reclamation efforts in the South China Sea. I mean, I think that those are related. So how are the decisions we're making today, how are they affecting the perception of American power? And in particular, I would just highlight again the word consistency and reliability over time, and how we're perceived by like-minded partners.

MAY: Going to ask a question I think is important, but ask you to be brief on this, but I do want to get it in, because then I want to ask another question. Then I'll go to the audience. And the question is this; you've all been involved in what's called the inter-agency process. You have tried to run the inter-agency process. You know how challenging that is. Now, what you're talking about here, making the case for here, I think most of us are agreeing is the need for a more coordinated cross-domain effort of the use of American military power, cyber power, economic power. That's going to be quite a bureaucratic challenge, is it not? To try to bring about that kind of coordination within the government as it's now structured?

ZARATE: Well, I would say as an outside observer, H.R. was trying to do this mightily and did it both in the construction of the strategy that was published under H.R.'s leadership and they did it in practice. I mean, case in point, the President gave a speech on Afghanistan given

his policy decision at the point where he admitted, "Look, I'm making a different decision than what I previously thought and what I previously promised." Pretty remarkable with this President who's been pretty steadfast in his views or pretty mercurial. Depends on your point of view, but I think H.R. was trying mightily.

I think the real challenge is less can you get the Department of Commerce and Energy and Treasury in the situation room. That we can do. The question is, can you align the elements of their power in addition to other elements of power? The innovation base, our tech companies, our financial institutions, investors, in a global way. That's very difficult in part because there are legal restrictions to how you do that. You know, Congress has passed the BUILD Act to try to reinforce American investment that would spur additional private sector investment. So there's attempts to get at this. I think the real challenge is less the inter-agency, Cliff. It's more how do you enable and enlist the private sector at a time when there's a lot of suspicion in the post-Snowden era with the tech company, a lot of distance between the private sector and the government. And so, I think that's the real challenge.

RAVICH: I couldn't agree more. Absolutely. You know, and it's really fantastic. On the Cyberspace Solarium Commission, one of the commissioners, there's four members of Congress and there's six outsiders, and I'm one. But one of them is Tom Fanning, who's CEO of Southern Company, one of the largest grid operators in the country. And it's fantastic having Tom on that Commission because again, if you thought five, 10, 15, 20 years ago, if there was this type of congressional commission, it would be people that have been in government or are in government or whatever. But the importance of having the private sector, what type of seat do they have at the table, right? I mean, they definitely have a seat at the table, but what type and where should they be is something that we're grappling with because the answers don't always reside in government right now.

MAY: All right. Unless you have – you want to add to that?

MCMASTER: No, no. That's fine.

MAY: I'm going to ask one more question, then I promise over to the audience, but I do want to narrow the aperture a little bit and I want to get your thoughts. We'll start with you again, H.R., on the President's decision to withdraw U.S. troops from Syria. General Votel, commander of U.S. Central Command from 2016 to 2019 said, "This decision threatens to undo five years' worth of fighting against the Islamic State and severely damages American credibility and reliability in any future fights where we need strong allies." We know the President also is thinking about withdrawing not some, but all of the troops, all 14,000 from Afghanistan. I'd like you to say anything you'd like to say about those decisions.

MCMASTER: Yeah. Well, let's think about where this is coming from. I mean, I think this is coming from this sentiment I think that the President and others perceive that our forces are not accomplishing worthwhile outcomes in these protracted commitments. What is missing I think is a more full understanding of what is at stake in Syria, what is at stake in Afghanistan, and how are the risks that our troops take and the sacrifices they make contributing to outcomes worthy of those risks and worthy of those sacrifices.

I believe that the true commitment in northeastern Syria was immensely helpful to U.S. security and U.S. interest in a number of ways. First of all, as we know, these terrorist groups just don't, after you defeat them on the physical battlefield, go away. They meld in, they take countermeasures, they maintain their networks, and they build their capabilities, looking opportunistically for ways to continue their campaign against us, to establish another emirate as part of a caliphate later. I mean, we know that this has to be a sustained effort to defeat ISIS. In the case of northeastern Syria as well, our forces there served as a useful means of preventing what we see now, which is a Turkish-Kurdish civil war that has profound political as well as humanitarian consequences in the region.

The other aspect of this is, as I mentioned in the beginning, military operations and efforts are not an end unto themselves, right? They're to help you bridge into political outcomes. And in northeastern Syria, that Syrian defense force with our special operations forces and those of our allies, happened to be sitting on top of 65 to 70% of serious oil reserves, which guess who really wants that badly? Vladimir Putin and the Assad regime, which is why he had Russian mercenaries attack our forces in April of 2018, resulting in the death of about 300 Russian mercenaries.

And so, once you cede control there, you cede influence over what does a post-civil war Syria look like? Does it keep a murderer in power who has created a humanitarian and political catastrophe in the greater Middle East and has enabled Iran in their effort to perpetuate a sectarian civil war, create a bridge to Israel and place a proxy army on the border of Israel? I mean, how can that be good? And then, and then does it guarantee Russia's interest in a post-civil war Syria? So what's unfortunate, I think, about the decision is I think a lot of people who may have been talking to the President, the President himself may not have focused maybe on the importance of that force in connection with defeating a terrorist organization, but also, having the influence necessary to ultimately help end this catastrophe across the greater Middle East associated with this broader sectarian civil war as it's playing out to still a certain extent in Iraq.

And so I think what we have in the beliefs now is a potential maybe for four simultaneous crises, right? We see one happening now, which is a Kurdish-Turkish conflict. Another could be an intensification of the Syrian Civil War. We saw how the United States exerted influence around Idlib so there wouldn't be another Aleppo that would happen. But whenever you think, "Hey, it couldn't get worse in the Middle East," guess what? It really could. So, there could be an intensification there. A destabilization of Iraq and who knows how that would play? What are the Sadrists going to do? And how does Iran see these protests, and what more will they do as they've tried to really effect state capture in Iraq?

And you have the continued effort on the part of the Iranians to seed, S-E-E-D, seed their network of proxies with more and more lethal and capable weapons that are aimed at who? Really, principally, Israel. Right? And so, I think Israel is in a relatively dangerous position. It always is, but I think maybe even more than usual. And then of course you have Iran who has been engaged in a proxy war against us since 1979. Samantha made the great point, we have to stop looking at each of these events, the cyber events you mentioned, as discrete events. Look at what - everything Iran is doing now, there's a precedent for. They've committed mass murder against us in our facilities and French facilities in 1983 in Lebanon, and Khobar Towers in '96.

The attack on the Saudi Arabian oil infrastructure. Hey, that looks a little bit like Operation Hodge in 1988, I think it was, with new capabilities. You know, they've mined the Bab-el-Mandeb and the Gulf before. They've used ship to shore missiles. They've been firing missiles into now UAE and Saudi Arabia. I mean they've – they've connected cyber-attacks against our banking systems.

We have to look at the Middle East and understand that we do have vital interests at stake. There are some who are arguing these days, "Hey, we make a lot of our own oil these days. It's not that important anymore." Well, the Middle East is important for a number of other reasons as well. Principal among them, I think, is that the perpetuation of the sectarian civil war also perpetuates and expands the threat from jihadist terrorists as well as empowers Iran, who really does have hegemonic designs on the region. I mean, we ought to read what they say, what the other says about us, and what they want to achieve. And they really do believe this really strange blend of Twelver Shi'ism and Marxism.

And so, I think oftentimes we tend to discount the ideological and emotional dimensions of what motivates our enemies. Because it doesn't make sense to us. We tend to mirror image like, "Well, why would they do that? Doesn't make sense for the IRGC to conduct another attack." Well, it's like the Geico commercial, right? When you're the IRGC, it's what you do. It's what you do. You conduct those attacks against us. But I think that there are these four potential really crises that could happen near simultaneously in the Middle East. And I think our troops here in the northeast at least was helping against two of those.

MAY: Do you want to add anything to that?

RAVICH: No, I'm good.

ZARATE: I just want to foot stomp everything H.R. said. Just three quick thoughts and I promise, Cliff, I'll be quick.

MAY: Let's hear it.

ZARATE: First is even if you agree with the decision we shouldn't be there we should get troops out, you've got to use our leverage to get other things, right? The President's a deal-maker. Use our withdrawal to get other things that we may need. My mom's Cuban. My sister's here. I'm very proud to have her here. She would often say, "No es el qué, es el cómo." It's not the what; it's the how. So even if you think we shouldn't be there, we shouldn't be in the middle of this mess, get something out of it. Don't make it so transactional that you lose the strategic impact of even the withdrawal. That's what I'm saying.

Two, it does send the signals around the world, and to H.R.'s point, everything we do in one part of the world is watched and witnessed by everyone else, right? Adversaries, friends, competitors alike. So what we're doing here to in essence lift the security veil with respect to those that have fought with us on the ground, have fought ISIS, have retaken Raqqa, is going to resound around the world to say, "Can we trust American promises, American security and

American military power?" And the answer today is probably no, right? That's what people are reading into it.

The third dimension of this, which is longer term and it goes to kind of H.R.'s work with his center is, what's our military posture? We're kind of caught in this all or nothing thing. We should bring all the troops home or not, right? We should be policemen in the world. You know, there's a middle ground there, right? We have a thousand troops having strategic impact in the region. If you listen to the troops, they're not happy about withdrawing. They see their important mission. The troops in West Africa attacking ISIS and enabling our allies to actually be better to fight on their own, that's enabling, right? So, we have to rethink how we even conceive of our military posture to do what H.R. said, which is to enable our friends and allies and other elements of power so that we can shape environments, not be absent from them.

MAY: Okay. Let's go to questions. Please identify yourselves. Brad, go ahead. I know who you are, but identify yourself for everyone else here.

BOWMAN: Great. Thank you, Cliff. Thanks to all of you for really important insights.

BOWMAN: I'm Brad Bowman with FDD Center on Military and Political Power. General McMaster, Sir, thank you for your leadership of CMPP. As you know, Turkey acquired the S-400 air defense system from Russia. The administration has moved to remove Turkey from the F-35 program. Sir, I'm interested in your thoughts. Do you believe it's time particularly at this moment to impose CAATSA sanctions on Turkey for its acquisition of the S-400?

MCMASTER: Well, thanks, Brad, and I'll ask for colleagues here to comment about this as well. I think it's inevitable. It has to happen, right? It's a matter of the CAATSA legislation. I know for sure that Turkey – Turkish leaders knew what the consequences would be of acquiring this system. It is incompatible to bring essentially a Russian Trojan horse into a NATO country in a way that could compromise some of our differential advantages in technologies, stealth technologies in particular. And so, I just think it's inevitable that it's going to have to happen. Now, it's regrettable, just as Turkey's actions today are regrettable.

What I think we have to try to understand is what's happening with Turkey. I think what's happening with Turkey is maybe the greatest geo-strategic or geopolitical shift that's happened in the post-Cold War period. And sadly, it's against us. Right? And I think that Turkey, at least under the ideology of the AKP President Erdoğan's party wants to see itself as shifted away from Europe and being more in the middle and more eastern leanings so it can play situations to its advantages that defines those its own interests.

What's tragic about it is – In my previous job I worked with colleagues in Turkey to map our interests and to show where our interests aligned and where they diverged. And you know what? They aligned like 95% of the time. Where they diverged was really with our support for the Syrian Democratic Forces, the YPG affiliated forces in Syria. And that's something we wanted to work on. And you saw that the administration was working on that with the joint patrols and so forth.

But I can only conclude that President Erdoğan is driven more by emotion, maybe by domestic political considerations and how he wants to really conjure up maybe a conflict like this for domestic reasons by bolstering his nationalist base. But it's regrettable. I think it's something we have to really work hard on diplomatically. But in terms of the sanctions, I just don't think that there's going to be an option. It's sad. I mean, it's been a sad couple days and it's going to get sadder, I think, as the relationship with Turkey becomes regrettably even more strained.

MAY: Joe, you go ahead and identify those. Okay. You got a mic? Go ahead. Stand up, identify yourself, if you would, and ask your question.

GLASSER: Thanks so much, General McMaster. Susan Glasser from *The New Yorker*. I think it's a really important point about Turkey and this geo-strategic shift. I do want to change the subject a little bit. It hasn't come up today, but I have a very simple question for you, which is, do you think it is appropriate for the President of the United States to solicit foreign interference in our political process? Thank you.

MCMASTER: Yeah. Of course, no. No, it's absolutely not. And of course, what has to happen here is seeing our democracy play out, right? Or the separation of powers play out. And for the American people, and through the representatives and the representatives in Congress to make a judgment as to whether or not that happened. But I mean, to answer your question directly, of course it's not appropriate. Any other comments, please?

MAY: Go ahead. No one has comments.

MCMASTER: Does anybody think it is appropriate?

MAY: Can we get the microphone over here from Susan. If you could get that microphone right here. No? All right. We got – Let her take one, and I – Go ahead.

KIM: Thank you. Connie from VOA. General McMaster. I wanted to ask you about North Korea. So, following the EU members expressing concern about North Korea's latest SLBM test, North Korea's saying they're ready to take steps to reverse, steps to building trust with the United States. So, if the North Koreans go ahead and test nuclear long-reach ballistic missiles, how do you think the U.S.'s engagement with North Korea is going to change? And quickly for Dr. Ravich we hear a lot about North Korea's growing cyber capabilities. So I was wondering if there is any area in the cyber field that you're paying attention to in terms of North Korea. Thank you.

MCMASTER: And I'll ask Juan to comment on this as well. Juan ran a task force for CFR years ago on North Korea as well. He came up with some great recommendations that we used as part of our development of the strategy about two years ago, I guess. Two and a half years ago. So, I think that one of the questions to ask about North Korea is what is motivating Kim Jong-un and the Kim regime, and I think this is where we get divergent views on what the appropriate response might be. Some people think, "Well, he just kind of wants a deterrent,"

right? He wants to deter us. And I think that is kind of a – It's a mirror imaging problem again, right?

I mean, the North has tremendous deterrent capabilities in their conventional forces. The artillery, for example, that is in the range of Seoul, and I think that we have to at least be open to the possibility that Kim Jong-un may want to keep his nuclear weapons too, really for reasons of extortion, to use extortion and threats, to rend the U.S.-South Korean Alliance as the first step in saying what the Kim regime has said it wants to do, right? Which is to unify the peninsula under the quote "red banner". And to do that, of course, they can't absorb South Korea. South Korea is twice as populous. Its economy is 40 times larger, than the North. But what the North I think envisions, has envisioned over the years, is dragging South Korea down as a way to equalize the playing field and to begin this unification. So I think we have to be open to that possibility, and so if that's the case, what is the appropriate response? I don't think it hurts to talk, to have another summit. In fact, I think the summits were beneficial in a certain way because in the past, the way that they had been approached before was all bottom-up, and they're just too many opportunities for spoiling. If there was going to be a breakthrough, it would be with an unconventional president, with really still, to some degree, an unknown quantity, in Kim Jong-un.

But I think what was essential though, and is still in place, is the recognition that what we cannot do, we cannot repeat the mistakes of the past, which is to allow this provocation cycle to then result in us, right, alleviating sanctions prematurely based on an empty promise essentially of negotiations really with no meaningful progress toward denuclearization. And then of course we know what happens next. Long, drawn-out negotiations during which the North Koreans try to extort more money and pay offs from us, and then ultimately what do you get? You get a weak agreement that locks in the status quo as the new normal, and then North Korea breaks that agreement right away. So that's the definition of insanity, if we do that again. So I think that the chance that we have, and this gets to Cliff's point on the integration of military options as well, which is important, how do we convince Kim Jong-un and the Kim regime that he is less safe with nuclear weapons than he is without them?

And that's not just a military threat. That is the threat of really strong sanctions, thanks to Nikki Haley and what she did at the UN. These are unprecedented sanctions. They haven't even really kicked in all the way because it's in December for example that all the North Korean slave labor, the so-called "guest workers", have to go back, for example. There are many more tools available. Secondary sanctions, if Chinese banks want to illicitly allow financial flows into North Korea as an example. This could be an option. So I'll just stop there, but I think we have to examine what is their base motivation and then therefore, what is an appropriate policy response, not just for us, but for partners and for China too. This is not in China's interest either, but I'll ask –

RAVICH: Yeah, I'll just say quickly, first of all on the website from the center, a great report that was written by my colleagues on Kim Jong-un's all-purpose sword, looking at the cyber enabled economic strategies of North Korea. But clearly on cyber, the North Koreans see this as in some ways, a comparative advantage for them. Their cyber force is almost equivalent to our national cyber mission force. The numbers over there aren't clearly known, but certainly they're putting a lot of effort and attention into this. Why? One is because it's a way to steal

money to support the regime. The other is, again, like we were talking about before, it is a way to try to level the playing fields to a certain extent between North Korea and other nations.

So I would say just two more things. One, South Korea is a test bed for a lot of what North Korea then tries around in the world. We, the United States and other allies, really need to be working so closely with South Korea to understand what is going on in their systems because it's, no pun intended with Sony, but it's going to come to a theater near you. But it's not just South Korea. North Korea is exploiting networks all over the world. This is a time where free market democracies and our allies need to be together on what the North Koreans are doing on systems around the world so we can chase them back and thrash them because, again, it's just like H.R. – they ratchet up, ratchet up, don't feel any punishment. They ratchet up, ratchet up again.

ZARATE: And they're profiting from the cyber tools right? UN report in the spring –

RAVICH: Yeah.

MCMASTER: Yeah –

RAVICH: Yeah, sure.

ZARATE: Over \$2 billion based on their cyber activities, the North Koreans exploiting it, ransomware, the whole nine yards attacking financial systems. The whole Bank of Bangladesh swift attack was the North Koreans, right? The one thing I would just say on sanctions, and it's fundamental to what H.R. was saying, we have a real challenge diplomatically as to how we think about negotiating with, though, and against our sanctions. So how do you apply maximum pressure and unwind it perhaps in the context of negotiations in a way that doesn't give up those sanctions too early, but gives the other side something they want, right? This is the whole JCPOA-Iran debate. Part of the challenge, and something that we've talked about for a long time is the effectiveness of these tools is often girded and based on the fact that these regimes are engaged in a whole range of illicit and nefarious activities that aren't being negotiated around. I testified to this. This was the fundamental flaw of the JCPOA.

You can't promise sanctions relief when the sanctions are predicated on terrorist financing, proliferation financing, missile programs that are a counter to UN sanctions, the whole nine yards. You can't unwind that and you can't expect the private sector to go back in wholeheartedly if those risks still exist. So that's still a fundamental challenge, I think, for both the effectiveness of our sanctions and the maximalist use of them, and then how you negotiate back and unwind them, and I think it takes some, not just understanding of the sanctions, but some deafness of the diplomacy to get that right.

MAY: Joe, go ahead. You had the microphone. Yes, go ahead.

HIATT: Hi, I'm Fred Hiatt from the *Washington Post* editorial page. Thank you for an interesting panel. However, I found the opening remarks a little disorienting in the sense that they assume that everybody agrees with you on who the adversaries are and the importance of

allies, and the problem is one of strategic competence as you said, or what we're not able to do. It seems to me we have a president who doesn't share your view of the importance of allies or who the adversaries are. This week's abandoning of an ally in a way that benefits Russia and Iran is just the most recent example, accepting their word over the intelligence community. And so I'm not going to go through it, but I'm curious whether you don't mention it because you think as long as the rest of the administration underneath is still trying to implement your strategy it's not that relevant, or it's relevant but counterproductive to talk about or it has an impact on what your goals are.

MCMASTER: Well, I just like to look at it broader than the president okay? I think, which is unusual for the president to do, I guess on occasion, but I think that President Trump is oftentimes, I think, expressing what is a feeling held much more broadly than maybe not in the beltway and those of us who were engaged in these issues at FDD and other places, but is held more broadly than President Trump. And I think what this does, and it's better for us to understand what he said yesterday, for example, about allies. That we've been taken advantage of. He's not – I don't think he's appreciative of the tremendous benefits from allies, but he's not alone in that. This goes back to the strain of American isolationism that resulted in the United States not joining the League of Nations at the end of World War I.

It's the reason why we didn't become involved in World War II until the Imperial Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. It's the reason why we've had this strain in our politics that even in the time of Jimmy Carter wanting to pull troops off the Korean Peninsula, for example. So I think that we should not define this as just a President Trump problem. And that's why Fred, I was trying to make the case to the American people, because that's what we have to do. I don't think our leaders talk enough about what is at stake, and then help Americans understand the great deal that we get. So let's think about two cocktail parties, man, competing cocktail parties. You got invitation, you can go to the one with China and their allies, or the United States and our allies. Which one are you going to go to? You know what I mean?

Look at who China's allies are. This gives us a tremendous, differential advantage, and that's because we are bound together by common principles and common interests. And so, of course, we're going to compete with the European Union from a trade and economic perspective, and I think they're fine with that. But we ought to recognize the value of a strong Europe ideologically, politically, economically, but at the same time give voice to what President Trump and others have asked, is greater burden sharing, which of course, as you know, that's not a new initiative either. Heck, Germany should do a heck of a lot more on defense. Why is Germany pursuing Nord Stream 2 in a way that is going to give Russia coercive economic power over Europe and disadvantage the Ukrainians at a critical time? These are – But allies can have these disagreements and they're not unprecedented.

So I think it's regrettable that may be more Americans overall, not to speak to directly to the president, don't understand the less tangible benefits and rewards from these alliances. And that doesn't mean there doesn't have to be tough love sometimes on this, and we ought to be really direct in our disagreements. If we look at Syria, why didn't the Europeans do more on Syria earlier? We debate about what more we should've done, but I think in terms of human cost and financial costs, pennies on the dollar to have established something like a no-fly zone like

was done at the end of the Gulf War for the Kurds, and to use not just military force, but robust humanitarian assistance earlier in the region. Think of what that would have done to stem the massive flow of refugees, and then of course the effect that's had on Europe politically with the growth of nativist parties and the polarization of their polities as well. So I think tough love with our allies is fine, but we ought to recognize that those alliances give us tremendous advantages that are mutually beneficial.

ZARATE: Fred, I'm happy to answer it very quickly. I think the president has a hyper-personalized approach to diplomacy, not to mention other things, so sometimes it makes it hard, and to your terminology even incoherent to sort of engage in these broader strategic questions when it's a hyper-personalized and very transactional and even again, some would argue, mercurial approach to decision making. So I take your point, but I do think there are elements of what the president has done, especially with respect to China, even calling on our European allies to do more that are important steps. And so one of the approaches I think we'd take is to look objectively at what's happening. There's lots of things that are wrong with the approach. There are certain things that are interesting and important, and to H.R.'s earlier point about North Korea, may take an unconventional approach to actually shatter the way that we thought about a particular relationship.

China has always been, for foreign policy types, and especially in the sanctions world, a third rail. Well, we're touching that third rail in many ways. We're designating Chinese entities, we're putting big SOEs on the entities list, we're questioning Huawei's technology and what it's doing around the world, and we're asking hard questions of the Europeans. I agree with H.R. I think one of the problems of this administration is they've ruptured relationships unnecessarily, all at once, when we need those relationships to do lots of hard things. China's a hard question for the world, and I pose questions to European allies, how is GDPR? Your privacy laws? Your norms? How is that applying in the Chinese context to Chinese technology, to Chinese institutions? Are you even asking that hard question?

And lo and behold, they're often not. This is a transatlantic debate. China's seems to be immune from what should be normalized treatment for any country or any commercial entity operating in the global environment. And so I take your point, there's a bit of incoherency when we talk about grand strategy and these things and the policy appears to be very mercurial and transactional, but there are elements of what the administration has done that we have to take advantage of to challenge ourselves and challenge the way we thought about these problems.

MAY: Go ahead.

MORGAN: Hi, Wes Morgan from Politico. Generally McMaster this one, I think, mainly for you about but I'd be interested in hearing from everybody. National security leaders both in and out of uniform this week are grappling with the president's decision to remove those special operators from the area that the Turks are launching this incursion into. I'm curious one, whether you think that that incursion could have been prevented, or whether this was an inevitable messy outcome for the SDF or grim outcome for the SDF in some fashion, eventually. And two, having served both in and out of uniform at high national security levels, could you talk a little bit about the duties and responsibilities of people in those positions ranging from resigning in protest when

there are policy decisions that they really strongly disagree with, to finding creative ways to execute the orders in ways that will help mitigate the repercussions of the Turkish offensive.

MCMASTER: Yeah. Okay. All right. So on the Turkish offensive, I really feel like we failed. The people who are working on policy failed over the years in Northeastern Syria to give the president, any president, an option other than go to war with a NATO ally or withdraw. And so again, it gets to not just using military force and those we're enabling, the SDF, to go after ISIS, it's how do you build into a sustainable political outcome? Maybe one in which you're repatriating, you're bringing back displaced Arab refugees and you're morphing the security arrangements there to allay Turkey's concerns, that there's not going to be an YPG army on their border. I think there might've been more things that could have been done to avoid that breakpoint. On your specific question of was this an action that was going to happen anyway? I don't know. I don't know the details of it. I would ask obviously State Department or The White House. I don't know.

On the military's role, hey, when you swear to support and defend the constitution of the United States, you recognize that your job is not to be political. You don't make policy decisions. Nobody elects generals to make policy. And so it's the reason why I just never even voted since I was 17. I went into West Point when I was 17 and I thought I took George Marshall's example of being completely nonpolitical. But in terms of policy decision making, what senior military officers owe any president is their best military advice. Then once those decisions are made, it's your job to implement those, if those are legal, to implement those.

Now if you were a senior officer, you disagreed with the policy because you thought it was illegal, then you could resign or request to retire and so forth. But I think for the military, there has to be a recognition that because sovereignty in our nation rests with the American people, it's the American people who ultimately have the say in what happens. They have that say through electing a president and electing their representatives in Congress. It's just not the military's role. Now they have to give their best advice to Congress and the Executive and that's difficult at times, but I'll tell you that the professional service men and women – I remember my Sergeant Major one time. He said, "Hey Sergeant, don't worry about it." He goes, "If they tell us to pack our stuff up and leave next week, we'll do it. And then if we get a call a week later, time to go back, we'll go back."

And I'd say we ought to just be so grateful for the selfless service, the courage of our service men and women. I just want to say one thing because you're making me think of it. Just quickly, if you guys don't mind, I'm sorry to go on about this. I've noticed a tendency in some of the coverage of our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines deployed, that there is a tendency these days to portray them as victims, as almost hapless victims who are on the receiving end of adversary actions, when in fact we are aggressively attacking the enemies of all civilization, and it doesn't really get a lot of coverage.

Our warriors have real agency. They're not passive and they don't like to be portrayed as victims. And so I think that it's something just maybe to pay attention to in the coverage of these wars, and something I think deserves more attention. Victimhood is the new heroism these days, it seems like, and really soldiers don't want to be pitied. What they would like to be maybe

acknowledged, what they would like to have acknowledged maybe is their combat prowess and what they're doing to defend us and what they're accomplishing to defend us. I think one of the reasons why there's this forever war narrative to a certain extent is that we don't do a good job of explaining to the American people what is at stake for us and in particular, the external threats that emanate from these various groups on the Afghanistan, Pakistan border and in Syria, and I'll stop there. Sorry to go on for so long but.

MAY: Hugely important points in my view. Somebody has got a microphone. Go ahead and use it.

GLANCY: Hi –

MAY: Stand up if you're willing.

GLANCY: Josh Glancy, *Sunday Times of London*. Be very pleased to be at your cocktail party if it comes at some point, but this is a question for all of you, but something General McMaster you mentioned, which is about perceptions of American power, how our allies perceive us. How do our allies perceive us? What happens when the president says something like the Kurds weren't with us at Normandy, which seems on the face of it, a rather absurd reasons for pulling troops out of Syria.

MCMASTER: You got to be pretty happy about that in the UK though.

GLANCY: Well, we were. It's true, but it just doesn't seem like, how does language like that, which really leaves a lot of us shaking our heads, affect how our allies perceive us in the world?

MCMASTER: Yeah. Well I'll tell you this. It's not the first time that our allies are feeling a degree of skepticism about us and our commitment. Our reputation has been that Americans don't have a long attention span for these sort of things. Was it George Marshall I think said, "Democracies can't fight a seven years' war," or something. Well, we're getting to year 20 in Afghanistan, so I think these tensions are not – and doubts about America's staying power commitment aren't there – Of course, they're not new at all, and you know how often Europe has vacillated between complaining, in the years of the Cold War, American troop presence there and then the angst about a potential withdrawal. So I just think that what we have to do is do a much better job of explaining the value of our alliances.

I'll just tell you that during an extended tour of duty in Afghanistan with my niece there, that was there, I remember a time when there was a decision made to reinforce our effort in Afghanistan, and at the same time, the time table for our withdraw was announced. Our allies, they couldn't believe it. They were like, "Why would you announce to the world when you're withdrawing at the same time you're deploying soldiers?" And I remembered the time an Afghan friend of mine said, "Will you please just be American? Be American about this and be committed to get the job done." So I just think there have been doubts across multiple administrations. I do think it's reaching a dangerous point here where I think there's too much misunderstanding and doubt, and Juan mentioned here gratuitous insults don't really help.

They're not productive, but both of you have long experience in cultivating and maintaining relationships with allies. What do you think?

RAVICH: I just want to say one thing, and this is from maybe the other side of the point on this when you said, "just be American." When we look at what we're trying to talk through with our allies on Huawei and what the Chinese are doing, we are being American. We are absolutely talking with our allies till we're blue in the face about recognizing the challenges that we all face going forward. A significant, substantial, some would say not just 5G, but in terms of where China wants to take the world in its own image, which is a frightening image of an authoritarian country that allows no freedom. America is trying to talk to our allies about recognizing the costs of some of the decisions that they are making.

Frankly we're telling them things like, "Look, if you are right and we are overstating what China is doing through 5G and through other things, okay great. You save a couple pennies by having Samsung or Erickson or Nokia or Huawei do your systems. If we're right, all of your most privileged prized data that runs your economy and runs your civilization is going straight back to Beijing." So I would say on some things, let's also keep the focus and the attention on where we are being very American and trying to get our voice out there, and yet there, there is serious pushback in a way that is detrimental to free market democracies around the world.

MCMASTER: And I would say to France, for example, who is looking at maybe 66% of their communications infrastructure being run by China, do you expect China to treat France better than they treat their own people? Probably not. So to the point Samantha's making, I think it's astounding the degree to which some of our allies had been accommodating, really, the Chinese Communist Party with really such a brazen, obvious threat to their own security.

RAVICH: That's right.

ZARATE: Yeah. Is China going to respect to data privacy that the French and all of us hold so dear? Probably not.

MAY: Here's what I'm going to do. Two final questions. One from Nicholas, one from Henry and I'm going to ask one question after another. Answer those questions and any final thoughts you have, present them.

WATERS: Hey, Nick Waters with *Bloomberg*. General McMaster, just wanted to follow up on Susan's question. Could you tell us whether there was any effort during your time in the administration by the White House to seek some sort of action by Ukraine on investigating Barisma/the Biden's and the 2016 election? Was that part of the conversation when you were there and could you also elaborate a little more on what your response was when you read the transcript of that Ukraine call and the whistleblower cable? Thank you.

MAY: And go ahead Henri and then we'll let you answer that or anything you want. We've got time constraints.

BARKEY: Henri Backey, Lehigh University and the Council on Foreign Relations. General McMaster, clearly President Trump took this decision on his own on a phone call. He did it before and General Mattis resigned over this. Now we have as a real crisis as you mentioned, and someone who watches, I do, and I can tell you this is going to be a massive invasion. Whatever happened, happened. What is it that you would do were you at the White House now? What would you tell the president or what would you try and do to mitigate the impact of this? And Juan, there's a Lindsey Graham and Van Holden legislation coming up for sanctions. Would you support that?

MCMASTER: So in all the conversations, all the meetings that I was privy to, there was never any incident. I'll just tell you, never any incident of the president soliciting any kind of assistance for anything domestic, political. It just didn't happen when I was there or in any conversation that I was privy to and part of which was I think almost all of the, really, all of the head of state calls and almost all the meetings. On what I would advise the president to do now, the president said something that indicated to me that he may not have been fully aware or President Erdoğan didn't really tell him about the nature of the operation he envisioned. I remember he said something like, "I'll destroy their economy if they do this."

So I think that there are or probably, I would imagine, already ongoing important discussions with the Turks now. I would say in connection with our allies, I hope that there are also important consequential discussions going on between our European allies and President Erdoğan as well. Something like I think 80% of Turkey's trade is with the European Union and he ought to understand that he's operating not just, I think, against U.S. interests in this case, but he's operating against European interests there. And of course, we're there with our French and British allies in Northeastern Syria as well. So, yeah.

MAY: Final thoughts?

ZARATE: I haven't looked at the legislations, it's hard for me to say, but the one area of caution, I'm a champion of these tools obviously, but I think we've got to be careful about maximalist use at first light. That is to say Congress has an instinct to go to a maximalist use of sanctions, financial and commercial measures without thinking through the sequence and the diplomacy that may be attached to it. So I would need to look at the actual provisions, but I think there should be a little bit of caution before jumping to sanctions, which has become a bit of a first instinct for Congress.

MCMASTER: Oh yeah. I read it cursorily. I'm in California now, man. So I, don't really – So I don't think I could really add anything to what anybody else has said or anybody else who's read it really.

MAY: We're just a little over. I would just say I think you can see why we're so proud of the centers that we have and the leading thinkers who are helping with this research that we're doing and the analysis and the advice that we were attempting to give. So a round of applause for our panel, thank you very much, and I thank all of you for being here today and for your support. Thank you.